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HOW ROLLY MADE GOOD

First of a Series of Adventures Into High-Society Life, Narrated by Professor McCabe, Exponent of Physical Culture.

BY SEWELL FORD.

Him? Why, that's Rolly. Sure thing! No, I ain't lookin' for tips on the stock market; if I was I'd go straight to the old man and get 'em. Do I know the old man? Didn't I put him in shape to stand that gruelin' he got when U. P. was bumpin' the bumps? That's how it comes that Rolly's a student of mine.

Says the old man to me: "Rolly's a good boy—when he's kept busy. He'll have enough on his mind in about two months, for I've fixed up a deal to marry him off, and after that I'm going to take him into the firm. He don't take very kindly to either proposition; so in the meantime, Shorty, I'm going to leave him to you. He's just got back from abroad with some fool notion or other in his head. I haven't had time to find out just what it is, but if it's anything you can knock out, hammer away."

So Rolly and me has been having two-hour sessions every day—gloves, mat, medicine ball, and all that—and for a youngster that began by goin' short of breath after the second round, he's turned out well. But, say, there's a few things that's clean out of my line. Playin' shappyrone is one of 'em.

I'll tell you how it was: You see, Rolly shows up here at this physical culture studio of mine reg'lar every day at 3. Well, we was having one of our little experience meetin's and was warmin' up to some fine short-arm work, when Swifty Joe—he's my new assistant from Williamsburg—Joe butts in and says, kind of wild like:

"Professor McCabe"—that's me, you know—"there's been some funny work on the studio door."

Well, we chases out to see what kind of a fool crack Swifty's makin' this time, and there we finds the thing that ties us up to trouble. It was a dinky lace handkerchief, pinned up there with the wickedest little blood-letter that ever came off the kninerack. Half an inch of the blade sticks through the panel.

Rolly, he jerks it loose, sizes it up a minute, and says: "Stiletto, eh? Made in Firenze—that's Florence, Italy. Shorty, have you any friends from abroad that are in the habit of leaving their cutlery in place of visiting cards?"

"I know folks as far west as Hoboken, if that's what you mean," says I; "but none of 'em are in the meat business." Then I picks up the handkerchief and takes a look at it.

"Hello!" says I. "There's writin' on this, writin' done in red ink."

"Read it," says Rolly.

"I could play it better on a flute," says I. "You try."

He didn't have to try hard. The minute he skinned his eye over that his jaw goes loose like he'd stopped a body wallop with his short ribs. "It's a message for me," he says.

"New kind of wireless from your wash-lady?" says I.

"Shorty," says he, lettin' my vaudeville lead go over his shoulder, "come inside and shut the door." Then when we'd locked ourselves in the dressin' room he opens up. "Did you ever hear of Sicily?" says he.

"Is it a breakfast food or a new kind of cigarette?" says I.

"It's an island," says he, "off the toe of Italy. I was there last summer. In Sicily I met a girl, a native, who—well, she saved my neck. Now she is somewhere in this city, probably in the Italian quarter, and she needs help. She's in trouble, serious trouble. I'm going to look out for her."

"Think she's mixed up with the dagoes?" says I.

"It's quite likely," says he, kickin' off his "gym" shoes and reaching for his shirt.

"Goin' alone?" says I.

"Unless you're willin' to go along," says Rolly.

"Then that's a Hey Rube for me," says I.

In ten minutes by the watch we were dressed and rattlin' down Broadway in one of those 'lectric hansoms, with the throttle yanked wide open.

"I know a dago roundsman," says I.

"No police in this," says he. "I'm going to call on the Italian consul. He's a friend of the old gentleman."

Maybe we broke the speed ord'nance some, but we were just in time to catch Mr. Consul on the fly, for he was about punchin' the time-card and shuttin' up shop when we blew in. He wore a rich set of Peter Cooper whiskers; but barring them he was a well-finished old gent. When Rolly let on who he was he gave us a bow that was an address of welcome all by itself, and the way he shoved out leather chairs you'd thought he was makin' a present of 'em to us.

But Rolly didn't have no time for flourishes. He comes right to cases; wants to know where the Sicilians usually head for when they leave Ellis Island; and what kind of Black Hand deviltry they were most given to. He asked forty questions and never answered one. Then he shook hands with Mr. Consul and we chased out.

"It looks like the Malabistos," says Rolly. "They have a kind of headquarters over a basement restaurant. Perhaps they've shut her up there. We'll look at the place, anyway."

A lot of good it did us, too! The spaghetti works was in full blast, with a gang of husky low-brows goin' in and out, smokin' cheroots half as long as your arm and acting as if the referee had just declared a draw. The opening for a couple of bare-fisted investigators wasn't what you might call promisin'. Not having their grips and passwords, we didn't feel as though we could make good in their lodge.

"I could round up a gang and then we could rush 'em," says I.

"That wouldn't do," says Rolly. "Strategy is what we need here."

"I'm just out of that," says I.

"Perhaps there's a back door," says Rolly.

So we moseys around the block huntin' for an alley. But that ain't the way they build down in Mulberry Bend. They chucks their old rookeries slam up against one another, to keep 'em from fallin' over, I guess. Generally, though, there's some sort of a garlic flue through the middle of the block but you need a balloon to find it.

"Hist!" says I. "Hold me head while I thinks a thunk. Didn't I come down here once to watch a try-out? Sure! And it was pulled off in the palatial parlors of Appetite Joe Cardenzo's Chowder association, the same being a back room two flights up. Now, if we could dig up Appetite Joe—"

We did. He was round the corner, close to a bar, playin' 'scope for brandied plums; but he let go the cards long enough to listen to my fairy tale about wantin' a joint where I could give my friend a private lesson.

"Sure!" says Joe, passing out the key. "But you breaka da chair I charga feefty cent."

There were two back windows, and the view wasn't one you'd want to put in a frame. It was almost dark; but down below I could make out a court filled with coal boxes and old barrels and perfumed like the lee side of Barren island. But catty-corner across was the back of that spaghetti mill. We could tell it by the two-decker billboard on the roof. In the upper windows we could see Dago women and kids, but the windows on the second floor were black.

"Iron shutters," says Rolly. "And that's where she is, if anywhere."

"Got a scalin' ladder and a jimmy in your pocket?" says I. "Then I'll have to run around to a three-ball exchange and dig up an outfit.'

A patent fire escape and a short-handled pickax was the best I could do. We made the board-jumper fast inside and down I went. Then there was acrobatics, swingin' across to that three-inch window ledge, balancin' with one foot on nothing, and single-hand work with the pickax. Lucky that shutter bar was half rusted away. She came open with a bang when she did come, and it near sent me down among the barrels. My eyelashes held, though, and there I was up against a dark window.

"See anything?" says Rolly.

"Room to rent," says I, for it looked like we'd pried open a vacant flat.

Just then the sash goes up with a run ond some one reaches out from the dark and catches me by the wrist. It was a cinch for them, me bein' fixed so I couldn't let go, and I hung there waitin' to feel myself being punctured. But it didn't come. Instead there was let loose a Dago remark that wasn't any use at all to me. It sounded mighty business-like; though for all that the words were so smooth and tinkly that I wasn't scared a little bit. It wa'n't no man's voice, I was sure of that.

"Guess your lady friend's here," I sings out to Rolly.

"Have you got her?" says he.

"No," says I; "she's got me."

But no sooner does she hear him than she lets go of me, shoves her head out of the window and calls up to him. Rolly says something back, and for the next two minutes they swaps Dago talk to beat the cars; so I knew we'd found the right girl.

"How shall I pass her up?" says I.

Just then she made a spring for that rope ladder of ours and overhands up like a trapeze star. An' me thinkin' we'd need a derrick or a bo's'n's chair!

It wa'n't no time for reunions at that stage of the game, nor for hard luck stories either. None of us was pinin' to hold any sociables with the Malabistos. We quit the chowder club on the jump, streaked up the hill into Mott-st., and piled into one of those fuzzy two-horse chariots that they keep hooked up for weddin's and funerals.

"Where to?" says the bone thumper.

"Head her for Buffalo and let loose to beat the lightning express," says I; "but hunt for asphalt."

That fetched us up Second ave., but there wasn't any conversin' done until we'd put fifty blocks behind us. Then I reckon Rolly asked his lady friend if she'd missed any meals lately. From the way he gave orders to steer for a food refinery she must have allowed that she had skipped a few.

Not havin' time to be particular we hit a goulash emporium where they spell the meat card mostly with C-Z's. But they gave us a private room upstairs, which was what we wanted.

"Shorty," says Rolly to me, "it's about time you were properly introduced. This is Caramel."

"Howdy!" says I.

It wasn't until then that I got a full-length view of her in the light. And say, I was glad we'd landed so far east of Broadway! Post me for a welcher if she wasn't rigged out in a reg'lar 'Pirates of Penzance' chorus costume. It would have been all night outside a Dreamland joint, and it would have let her into the Arion ball without a ticket, but it wasn't built for circulatin' around New York in.

"Piffle, piffle," says I to Rolly. "Folks'll think we've pinched her out of a hippodrome ballet. Hadn't we better send for your lady friend's trunk?"

Rolly grinned, but he looked her over as satisfied as if she'd been dressed accordin' to his own water-color designs. And she was something of a star—yes, yes! If you were lookin' for figure and condition, she had 'em. And when it came to the color scheme—well, no grease paint manipulator ever mixed caffy-o-lay and raspb'ry pink the way it grew on her. For a made-in-Sic'ly girl she was the real meringue. But her clothes was the limit.

Where'd she get 'em?" says I.

Rolly, he says as how them was the kind of togs she wore all the time when she was to home. They were the kind he'd first seen her in, and he reckoned that she'd left in a hurry.

"We'll see about gettin' something more suitable for her later on," says he, and orders up seventeen kinds of skeezedsky, to be served in relays.

Miss Carrie Meyer, or whatever her name was, had brought her appetite along, even if she had mislaid her suit case. And while she was pitchin' into what passes for grub on Second ave., she tells Rolly the story of her life—leastways, that's what it sounded like.

As I gets it from him afterwards it was like this. She'd had some kind of a run-in with the old folks, they wantin' her to marry a feller that owned a sulphur mine and was rich enough to pension off the rest of the family. But Miss Caramel wouldn't have it, for some reason or other that she didn't state, and when things got too hot for her she slid out the back door, hoofs it to town, takes out a yellow ticket on a few sparks, and buys a steerage berth for New York.

Well, she hadn't more'n got past Sandy Hook before a Malahisto runner spotted her. So did the advance man of another gang. They sized up the gold hoops in her ears, her real money necklace and some of the other fancy furniture she sported, and they invited her home to tea.

Just how the scrap began or what it was all about she didn't know; so the story by rounds hasn't been told. The next things she knew, though, they'd hustled her into the Bend and bottled her up in that back room, but

The Countess tells Rolly the story of her life.

not before she'd done a little extemporaneous carvin' on her own account. I gathered that three or four of the Malabistos needed some plain sewin' done on 'em after the bell rang, and that the rest wasn't so anxious for her society as at first.

She'd been cooped up for two days before she managed to get hold of a Dago woman who promised to hunt up Rolly and give him that message. Not bein' able to break into the Fifth avenue joint where Rolly's old man lives, she had trailed Rolly to the studio and hung the message up on my door.

"So far it's as good as playin' leading heavy in 'The Shadows of a Great City,'" says I; "but what's down for the next act? Where does she want to go?"

Say, you'd thought Rolly'd been nipped with the goods on. He goes strawb'ry color back to his ears. Next he takes a look across the table where she sits quiet and easy and as much to home as Lady Graftwad on the back seat of the tonneau. She was takin' notice of him, too, kind of runnin' over his points like he was somethin' rich she'd won at a raffle and was glad to get. But Rolly, he braced up and looks me straight in the eye.

"Shorty," says he, "I want to call your attention to the fact that this young lady is something like three thousand miles from home; that I am the only person on this side of the ocean that she knows by sight; and that once she saved my neck."

"If you say so, it goes," says I. "But what does it lead up to? Where do we exit?"

"That," says Rolly, "is a conundrum."

"Ain't she got any program?" says I.

"She—er—that is," says Rolly, trying to duck—"she says she wants to go with us."

"Whe-e-ew!" says I through my front teeth. "This is so sudden! Just tell the lady, will you? that I've resigned."

"No you don't, Shorty," says he. "You'll see this thing through."

"But look at them circus clothes!" says I. "I've got no aunts or grandmothers or second cousins who'd stand for anyone rigged out like that."

"Nor I," says Rolly. But he didn't look half so worried as he might.

Say, when I came to figure out what we were up against I could feel little cold-storage whiffs on my shoulder blades. Suppose some one should meet you in the middle of Madison Square, hand you a ring-tailed tiger, and then skidoo. What? That would be an easy one compared to our proposition. It wasn't a square deal to shake her, and she'd made her mind up not to stay put anywhere again.

"Wait here until I telephone some one," says Rolly.

"De-lighted!" says I. "Better ring up the Gerry society too, while you're about it."

Miss Caramel and I didn't have a real sociable time while Rolly was

Down comes a big rose.

gone. I could see she was watchin' every move I made, as much as to say: "You can't lose me, Charlie!" It was just as cheery as waitin' in the sergeant's room for bail.

When Rolly shows up he wears a reg'lar breakfast food smile. "It just occurred to me," says he, "that I had accepted an invitation from the Van Urbans for the opera."

"What kind of a bluff did you throw?" says I.

"None at all, Shorty," says he. "I just asked if they would have room for three, and they said they would."

Say, that Rolly don't need no nerve tonic, does he? You know about the Van Urbans, don't you? They weigh in something like umpteen millions, and are a good fifth on Mrs. Astor's list.

"Straight goods now," says I—you don't reckon to spring this aggregation on the diamond horseshoe, do you?"

"We must put in the time somehow," says he.

I thought it might be all a grand josh until I'd watched some of his moves. First we hunts up one of those swell shops where it just says "Robes" on a brass plate outside. Rolly stays in there four minutes and comes out with a piece of dry goods that they must have stood him up a hundred for: kind of a cloak, ulster length, all rustly black silk outside and white lined. Miss Creamdrops, she puts it on with no more fuss than as if she'd been brought up on such things and had ordered this one a month ahead.

Next we shifts our Mott-st. chariot for the real article—with rubber tires and silver lamps, and heads for the studio, havin' stopped long enough for Rolly to 'phone his man to chase his spike-tailed suit down there hot-foot.

About that time I got wise to the fact that Rolly and the girl were ringin' me into their talk, and I was gettin' curious. I see Rolly shaking his head like he was tryin' to prove an alibi and every once in awhile pointin' to me. First thing I knows she'd quit his side of the carriage and was snugglin' up alongside of me, cooin' away in some outlandish kind of baby talk that I didn't savvy. I made no kick, though, until she begins to pat me on the head.

"Call her off, will you?" says I. "I'm no lost kid."

"The young lady is merely expressing her thanks," says Rolly, "to the gallant young hero who so nobly rescued her from the Malabistos. Don't shy, Shorty. She says that any one as brave as you are needn't worry about not being handsome."

He was kiddin' me, see? And I didn't have no comeback that she could understand. I felt like a monkey, though, havin' my hair mussed and thinkin' maybe next minute she'd give me the knife. And Rolly sat there grinnin' like a jack lantern.

I didn't get a chance to break away until we got to the ranch here. Then we left her in the buggy while we went up to make a lightnin' change. Me too? Sure! I've got a head waiter's rig. Bought it for Tim Grogan's annual ball, but I never looked to wear it out attendin' grand opera.

"I hope the Van Urbans will appreciate that I'm givin' 'em a treat," says I.

"They'll be blind if they don't," says Rolly. "Is it your collar that hurts most?"

"No, it's the shoes," says I; "but maybe the pain'll numb down by the time we get there."

We made our grand entry about the end of the second spasm. The Van Urbans had taken their corners. There was Papa Van Urban, lookin' like ready money; and Mama Van Urban, made up regardless; and Sis Van Urban, one of those tall Gainsborough girls that any piker could pick for a winner on form and past performance.

Say, it took all the front I had in stock just to tag along as an also ran, and when I thought of Rolly headin' the procession I was dead sorry for him. I couldn't see how he was goin' to make good. And what kind of a game do you think he hands out? Straight talk, nothin' but! Course, he didn't make any family history out of tellin' who his lady friend was, but as far as he went it tallied with the card.

"Out we go now!" says I to myself, and looks to see Mama Van Urban throw a cat fit. But she didn't. She just squealed a little, same's if some one had tickled her behind the ear, and then she began slinging that gurgly-gurgly Newport talk that the Sixth ave. saleslades use. Sis Van Urban caught the same cue. To hear 'em you'd think Rolly'd done something real cute. They gave Miss Caramel the lofty wig-wag and shooed her into a stage corner chair.

She never made a kick at anything until they tried to take away her cloak. Not much! She was just beginnin' to be stuck on that. She kept it wrapped around her like she knew the proprietor wa'n't responsible for overcoats. Rolly tried to tell her how there wa'n't no grand larceny intended, but it was no go. She had her suspicions of the crowd, so they just had to let her sit there draped. And at that she wasn't any misfit.

Now I'd seen the inside of the Metropolitan Opera house once or twice before, havin' blown myself to a standee just for the sake of looking at the real things with their war paint on; but I wasn't feelin' any more to home in the back of that box than I would in a pulpit. But the Sic'ly girl didn't show no more stage-fright than an auctioneer. She just holds her chin up and looks out at all that display of open-work dress-making and cut-glass exhibit without so much as battin' an eyelash. She was takin' it all in, from the bargain hats in the family circle to the diamond tummy warmers in the parterre. You'd never guessed that she'd come from a Dago back district where they have one mail a week.

There was some rubberin' at her, of course, and I expect we had the safety-vault crowd guessin' as to what kind of a prize the Van Urbans had won; but it didn't faze her a bit. She just gave 'em the Horse-Show stare, as cool as a frapped mint. Nor the ringin' up of the curtain didn't disturb her either. When a chesty barytone sauntered down to the footlights and began callin' the chorus names she glanced over her shoulder casual like, just to see what the row was all about, and then went on sizin' up the folks. She couldn't have done it better if she'd taken lessons by mail.

"If she would only talk!" gurgles Mrs. Van Urban. "Doesn't she know a word of English?"

"She speaks nothing but pure Sicilian," says Rolly, "and the way she talks it is like music. Wait."

Pretty soon the barytone quits jawin' and a prima donna in spangled clothes comes to the front. Maybe it was Nordica or Melba. Anyway, she was an A1 warbler. She hadn't let go of more'n a dozen notes before Miss Caramel begins to sit up and take notice. First she has a kind of surprised look, as if a ringer had been sprung on her; and then, as the high-C artist begins to let herself go, she swings around and listens with both ears. The music didn't seem to go in one ear and out the other; it struck somewhere between and swayed and lifted her like a breeze in a posy-bush. I could hear her toe tappin' out the tune and see her head keep time to it. Why, if I could get my money's worth out of opera like that I'd buy a season ticket.

When the prima donna had cut it off, with her voice way up in the flies somewhere, and the house had rose to her, as the bleachers do when one of the Giants knocks a three-bagger, Miss Caramel was still sitting there, waitin' for more. Her trance didn't last long, though. She just cast one eye around the boxes and down to the orchestra, where the people was splittin' gloves and yellin': "Brava, brava," so that you'd thought somebody'd carried Ohio by a big majority, and then she takes a notion to get into the game herself.

Shuckin' that black cloak, she jumps up, drops one hand on her hip, holds the other to her lips, and peels off a kind of whoop-e-e-e-e yodel that shakes the skylight. Talk about your cornet bugle calls. That little ventriloquist pass of hers had 'em stung to a whisper. It cut through all that patter and screech like Trinity chimes splittin' a fish-horn serenade, and it was as clear as the ring of silver sleigh-bells on a frosty night.

After that it was all up to her. The other folks quit and turned to see who had done it. Two or three thousand pairs of double-barreled squint-glasses was pointed our way. The folks behind 'em found something worth lookin' at too. Our Sic'ly lady wasn't in disguise any more. She stood up there at the box rail, straight as a Gibson girl, her black hair hangin' in two thick braids below her waist, the gold hoops in her ears all a-jiggle, and her black eyes snappin' like a pair of burning trolley fuses. Well, say, if she wa'n't a pastel I never see one. I guess the star singer thought so too. She'd just smiled and nodded at the others, but she blew a kiss up to our girl before she left.

I don't know just what would have happened next if some one hadn't shown up at the back of the box and asked for Rolly. It was the Italian consul, that we'd seen earlier in the day.

"Where did you find her?" says he.

"Meaning who?" says Rolly.

"Why, the Countess Padova."

"Beg pardon," says Rolly; "but if you mean the young lady there, you're mistaken. She's a peasant girl who has come over from Sicily to discover New York."

"She's the Countess Padova or I'm a Turk," says the consul. "Ask her to step back here a moment."

It sounded like a pipe-dream, all right. Who ever saw a countess rigged out for the tambourine act and mixin' with chestnut roasters? But Mr. Consul had the evidence with him. As he told it, she was sure-enough countess, so far as the handle went, only the family wasn't livin' up to their pedigree. It seems that away back, before the Chicago fire or the Sayers-Heenan go, Miss Caramel's great-granddaddy had been a real top-noteher who had done the count act in regulation style. Then there'd come along a war, or some kind of a mix-up. He was euchred out of his castle and building-lots and had to take to the suburbs. But he kept on being a count just the same. The consul hadn't known great-grandpop himself, but Miss Padova's father had been a chum of his at boarding school or somewhere, and he was thick with the family. So when the countess takes it into her head to slide for America with a tin trunk Pop Padova cables over a general alarm to his old friend.

"I had been having Mulberry Bend raked with a fine tooth comb without finding a trace of her," says he, "but when I saw her standing up here in this box I knew her at a glance." Then he asked Miss Caramel if he hadn't called the trick, and she said he had.

"Then," says he, "perhaps you will tell us why you came to America?"

"Sure," says she, or something that meant the same. "I've come over after my best feller. I'm going to marry him," and with that she slips an arm around Rolly's neck, as cool as though they'd been on a moonlight excursion with the deck lanterns turned off.

Mr. Consul's face goes as red as a fireman's shirt. Mama Van Urban puts up her long-handled eye-glasses and stares at Miss Padova like she was tryin' to see through her into the last of next week. Papa Van Urban side-steps as if he saw trouble comin' his way. Sis Van Urban was just breathing hard and putting a forty-dollar iv'ry fan out of business between her fingers. When I see that I remembers what the old gent had told me about Rolly's being booked to be married.

"Great upper cuts!" says I to myself. "That's the girl!"

Then I looks at Rolly. He hadn't budged or turned a hair. He just stands there, with the Sic'ly lady patting him on the shoulder.

"However unexpected," says he, "the honor is all mine." And say, you'd have thought he meant every word of it.

"Ahem!" says the consul, steadyin' himself with a grip on the curtains. "Perhaps it would be best to make some explanation."

Well, he tackled the job. He says as how it was likely that Miss Padova, being a countess at home, had some ideas on the courtin' game that might seem queer to us. Over there when a countess went out of her class she didn't have to wait for the chap to make the first move. It was etiquette for her to say: "Come along, honey; you're mine!" and walk him off to the priest. She'd sized Rolly up that way, not knowin' he was a good deal of a rooster himself, with real money enough to buy up a whole rinkful of Dago counts.

"And now," says the consul, "before this goes any further, perhaps it would be best for the countess to have a talk with my wife. We'll take her home."

Well, they settled it that way, and I was mighty glad to get her off our hands so easy. But as Rolly says good night to the Van Urbans I notices the thermometer below zero.

Nexa day the consul shows up at the studio, where I was tryin' to interest Rolly in a new whipsaw counter. "Young man," says he to Rolly, givin' him the right hand of fellowship, "after what you did last night I'm proud to know you. And I'm happy to state that it's all off with the countess."

Then he went on to say how Miss Padova, when she tumbles to the brash kind of a play she'd made, and finds out who the other girl was, feels like a plush Christmas box at a January sale. She turns on the sprinkler, wants to know what they suppose Rolly thinks of her, and says she'll go back to Sic'ly by the next boat.

"We'll send her back to her father Saturday," says the consul, "and you may rest assured that the incident is closed."

I was lookin' for Rolly to open a bottle or so on that, but he didn't. For a pleased man he held in well. "Poor little girl," says he.

About that time the studio door opens and in comes Rolly's old gent, lookin' about as calm as a hot-chowder kettle with the lid on.

"Rolly," says he, not sparrin' any for an opening, but jumpin' right in, "here's a ring of yours that's returned, with thanks."

Rolly takes the spark, shoves it in his vest and remarks:

"That simplifies matters a lot."

"Does, eh?" says the old man, squintin' at him through those X-ray eyes of his. "But it doesn't make matters very clear to me. Now what sort of a young woman was it that you sprung on the Van Urbans last night?"

"The right sort, sir," says Rolly, "or else she wouldn't have been there."

"Sounds well enough," says the old man; "but who is she, who's her folks, and all that?"

"Her father," says Rolly, planting himself firm on his pins and stickin' his under jaw out, "is a native of Sicily who lives on a three-acre farm that's worth probably about two hundred dollars. As for the young lady, she's the one I tried to tell you about. She picked me up in the hills of Sicily one night last summer when I was wandering about lost and in danger of breaking my neck or being shot."

"Very fine!" grunts the old man. "But Van Urban says that she gives out that she has come over here to marry you. What right has she talking any such blasted nonsense as that?"

"None at all, sir," says Rolly. "But she will have the right inside of half an hour. I'm going up there now. Come on, Shorty, I need you as a chaperon."

The old gent never peeped, and his mouth closed up as tight as a safe door, but I could tell by the look of his eyes that he thought more of Rolly that minute than he had ever before in his life. We left him an' the consul lookin' at each other like a pair of wax figures.

Now playin' shappyrone ain't just in my line, as I've said; but I went along that time, and we chases up to the consul's house. Talk about your hard frosts! That was an ice house call, all right. They left us on the door mat while the word goes upstairs, and after awhile the hired girl comes down to give us the book agent stare.

"The' missus," says she, "says as how the young lady begs to be 'xcused."

"Does the young lady know?" says Rolly.

"She does," says the girl, and shuts the door.

"Gee!" says I, "that's below the belt."

Rolly didn't have a word left in him; but I wouldn't have met him in the ring about them for a bookie's bundle. Just as we hit the sidewalk we hears a front window go up, and down comes a big red rose plunk in front of us.

"Is it a token?" says I, handin' it to Rolly.

"It is, Shortly," says he. "It means that I'm going back to Sicily to buy up a certain decayed old castle that I've heard about."

"The Padova homestead?" says I.

"None other," says he.

And say, when a clean-cut youngster like Rolly opens trainin' quarters right on the ground, I can see the finish of that duck with the sulphur mine, eh?

BOOKIE GOT DOUBLE CROSS

How "Lucky" Baldwin Fooled "Smiling" Taggart and Made a Big Killing.

(New York Telegraph.)

So you cut in yesterday. Where'd you dig the bank roll?"

"Smiling" Taggart thus addressed by "Lucky" Baldwin, put on a soubrettish look.

"Oh, I can dig when I have to," said he, complacently. "And, by the way, Mr. Baldwin, if you feel like plungin', why, don't overlook the big store. They'll never put piker over my grave."

"You're a slick young fellow," approved Baldwin. "So you're honing for the boys to bet 'em high?"

"Sky's the limit," grinned Taggart. "I like to get mine quick, and I'll take a chance to get it, too."

"That's real bookmaking," said Baldwin. "I'm liable to tell you to take in some money for me one of these days."

"What, on the big horse? You're going to—"

"Son, I said maybe," cautioned the slim old Californian. "I'll talk to you later."

Lucky B. would start in a big stake next day. All sportive Chicago would be at Washington park to watch this, the second important event of the summer meeting.

On report and personal judgment Taggart had figured the Baldwin horse to win.

"But I guess I didn't have all the angles," he ruminated; "but if he comes round to me before that race I'll sure grab myself a piece of money. I don't quite get this though. Lucky B.'s good enough to cop, I believe."

The wise betters whose habitat was the ring agreed with Taggart. But he had followed racing for a long period, and knew that there were times when past performances and morning trials had best not be considered.

"He's a foxy old guy," he declared, "but if that play of his comes off I'll lay against Lucky B. until the last dollar's in."

At 11 the next morning Cyclone, the black rubber, was braiding a $10 bill in Lucky B.'s mane. The track horseshoer had just left the stall, after plating the horse afresh.

"Lameness all out of him this morning, Cyclone?" asked Baldwin, arriving unexpectedly.

"He's feelin' like a yearlin', suh," said Cyclone; "kickin' an' prancin' all ovah. Looks like he cayn't lose less'n he falls down."

The trainer appeared.

"Nothing to it," he observed; "even if no one scratches I don't worry. He can beat everything in the race. I'll send a couple of hundred over myself, and you know I don't bet much."

"Reckon he'll do," said Baldwin briefly. "I'll see you in the paddock if I get in there. I've got a lot to attend to."

"Here comes Lucky Baldwin," said Taggart's money-taker before the races began; "headed this way, ain't he?"

Baldwin motioned Taggart to a private conference. He handed him a small roll of bills.

"There's ten $1,000 notes," said he; "take in that much for me. He won't be better than even money."

"Be favorite, sure," said Taggart, thoughtfully, "so you don't think you could win with him?"

Baldwin laughed. Under his wide-brimmed black sombrero his sharp eyes narrowed as he stared at Taggart. His reply was merely a murmur, which Taggart did not understand. Then he spoke in a raised voice.

"You ought to double your bankroll this afternoon, if you're the smart lad you seem to be."

"I won't be found asleep at the switch," chuckled Taggart.

"I'll send Counsellor Bill to collect for me," said Baldwin, and hurriedly departed.

"What'd he want?" the cashier was eagerly curious.

"A little business deal," said Taggart, softly. "Keep this to yourself, John. If you insist on playing in your salary today, don't waste it on Lucky B. There's nothing doing."

"Snatchin' him, eh? Well, what do you think o' that? And I thought he was a pine."

Taggart's book won to the first three races. The slate of the ring's pricemaker, when the odds were chalked for the fourth proclaimed that 9 to 10 was the opening quotation on Lucky B.

The speculative rushed up and down the ring.

"Here's tops, boys!" roared Taggart. "Better grab before I start to rub!"

He offered evens against Lucky B. The bets came up to him in bunches of bills and rolls of clinking silver.

From some untraceable source Lucky B. money, in large amount, was all over the ring, and Taggart got the bulk of it. The more they bet the gayer were his banterings.

"Perhaps they'd rather see some 6 to 5," he said, and hastily changed the odds.

A new rush ensued. Taggart was a gambler, and the players were aware of it. If he fancied a horse it was not difficult to discover what it was, and when a favorite appeared to him as figuring at longer odds, he commanded patronage by following his feelings.

"When Taggart don't like one he'll send up the price until his book suits him," said the talent.

Therefore, when betting became listless and the bugle's call to post sent most men scurrying outside to view the start, he displayed 2 to 1, there was no surprise.

A stranger poked a thousand-dollar bill at him.

"All of it?" he asked, doubtfully. "Lucky B. straight?"

"And another if you got it," retorted Taggart. "Don't be shy, sir."

A second bill went into the cash box.

"Four thousand to two thousand," called Taggart; "any more?"

Thus urged, the better produced some smaller bills, $1,000 in all, and bore away tickets calling for $6,000 in winnings if Lucky B. should be first.

Tagart, carrying a high stool, hustled to the lawn to see the race.

"What's in front?" his sheetwriter pulled his arm.

Taggart, his glasses on the field, had lost his usual smile. He looked around, calmly.

"Lucky B. by forty lengths—that's all," he answered. "Our elderly pal, Mr. Baldwin, has handed me the double cross. That was his own coin I was taking in, and he'll take $20,000 more out of my book than he put into it today."

"Horse racing's a queer business," said the sheetwriter, gloomily. "Say, there's the old man now, pipin' you off."

Smiling Taggart instantly put on his race-track smile. Baldwin answered it with another. The sheetwriter, regarding Taggart, felt a pride in his employer. It wasn't every man who could work for a good loser.

SCHWAB'S NEW DRESS.

(New York Press.)

While Mr. C. W. Schwab was in London he introduced a new fashion in evening dress that caused considerable comment. Every evening he appeared in the Savoy dining room wearing a dinner jacket, silk hat, white necktie, and fancy vest. Just think of that, a white tie with a dinner jacket! It made the Johnnies from Mayfair gasp until they were almost speechless, and "By jove, d'ye know," gurgled one, "upon me word he did have a silk hat, too. I saw it with me own eyes. What?"